A SERMON OF REPENTANCE.

A very godly and profitable Sermon, Preached at LEE in ESSEX.

BY

ARTHVR DENT, Minister of Gods word.

Published at the request of sundry godly, and well disposed persons.

IONAH 2. 8.

They that waite upon lying vanities forsake their owne mercies.

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In Concionem *Arthuri Dent*, *G. Pudei* Carmen.

MAture reſipiſce precor peccataq́ linque;
Qui legis aut audis, quiſquis es, iſtud opus:
Si noua peccatis peccata prioribus addes,
Olim hæc te contra Concio teſtis erit.
Hæc aliqui lecta flentes ſua crimina multum,
Mutarunt mores, & noua vita placet.

The ſame in Engliſh.

THou that doſt read or heare this worke
I wiſh thee to doe this:
Repent in time, and ſinne forſake,
Amend what is amiſſe.
But if thou wilt adde ſinne to ſinne,
Not minding to amend:
This Sermon ſhall a witneſſe be
Againſt thee in the end.
Some that haue heard this read of late,
Lamenting much their ſinne,
Haue chang'd their former manners, and
A new life now beginne.

To



To the Reader.

ALthough I was moſt vnwilling that this poore Talent and trauell of mine, ſhould euer haue beene brotched abroad, and come to light, both becauſe it may ſeeme as a Candle lighted at Noone-day, as alſo becauſe many other mens doings might more worthily a great deale haue beene publiſhed and committed vnto letters; yet becauſe diuers which heard it preached with a liuely voyce, were very inſtant, yea and more then importunate with me, to haue it publiſhed, vling ſuch reaſons as I could not greatly gaine-ſay, I did at the laſt yeeld to their requeſt; and ſo this vntimely fruit is come abroad to be ſolde in open markets. Let no man therefore be offended, that I haue not ſtrained my ſelfe

to flye an high pitch, to foame out the froath of mans wiſedome, and to make a great ſhew of learning, by blowing the bladder of vanitie till it burſt with ſwelling: for that is not my vſe, I ſeeke eſpecially the ſaluation of the ſimple and ignorant: and therefore ſtoope downe to their reach and capacitie. Therefore I beſeech thee, gentle Reader, accept my good meaning: Reade this without preiudice, like it as thou profiteſt; ſo ſhalt thou haue praiſe of GOD, and comfort in thy Conſcience.



A SERMON of Repentance.

LVKE 13.5.

I tell you nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.



THE occasion of these words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was, because there were certaine from the with the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their owne sacrifices, that is, murthered them as they were sacrificing, and so their blood was mingled with the blood of the beasts which were sacrificed. These men therefore thought that those Galileans were greater sinners then all other Galileans, because they had suffered such things: and that those eighteen also, upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell & slew them, were sinners above all the men that dwelt in Ierusalem. Wherein they did vtter a secret corruption naturally engendred in al men: that is, very sharply to see into the sins of others, seuerely to censure of them, but in the meane

while to flatter themselues, & to be blind-fold in seeing their owne sinnes. For these men thought, because the like iudgements did not fall vpon them, therefore they were well enough, they were not so great sinners, but rather highly in the fauour of God, according as many do falsely suppose, that they are alwaies the worst sort of people whom God doth most strike and pzelle with his punishing hand, hauing forgotten that God doth not keepe an ordinary rate here below, to punish euery man as he is worst, or to fauour and cocker him as he is best, but onely taketh some examples as he thinketh good for the instruction and admertisements of all others, and setteth as it were [illegible] glasses, wherein euery man may see his owne face, yea, and his owne vnsure handled; and that God is a seuere reuenger of sin, that all men may learne by the example of some to tremble and beware, least peraduenture they be worthily confirmed to keepe their owne sinnes, and so know what they haue deserued. These men, which brought these newes to our Sauiour Christ, had taken forth this lesson: whereupon our Sauiour is iustly occasioned to correct their irrationous and sinister iudgement, and to teach them that they must not reioyce at the iust punishment of others, but rather be instructed thereby to repent.

And

And further to signifie that God doth not alwaies most punish the most notorious offenders, as Murtherers, Theeues, Robbers, Whoremongers, Blasphemers, Quarrellers & coffers, and such like: but reserueth them vnto the iudgement of the great day, and as it were latteth them against the day of slaughter; and therefore he answereth them negatiuely, and saith, No, or not so; but except ye repent, ye shall likewise all perish: As if he should say: Are yee all of this opinion indeed, that only monstrous sinners are punished in this world, and others let alone? or that the Galileans, and those 18. vpon whom the Tower of Siloam fell were greater sinners then all others? Or doe you thinke because the same iudgements haue not light vpon you, therefore you shall steale away in the darke, and escape the iudgements of God. No, no, you are deceiued: For I say vnto you, that except you mourne & lament for your sins, and fall to some agreement with God in time, you (I say, euen you, which are so ready to condemne others, and iustifie your selues) shall not only perish with the like iudgements in this present world, but be eternallastingly condemned in the world to come. So that our Sauior in so saying, doth thunder downe a most dreadfull sentence vpon all our heads: for he concludeth and setteth downe,

that

that all men liuing vpon the face of the earth, whether they be high or low, rich or poore, young or old, noble or vnnoble, learned or vnlearned; simple or politicke, of what estate, degree, and condition soeuer they be, liuing and dying without repentance, shall perish and be damned in hell-fire for euer. The Scriptures are full of such thunder-bolts. Ioh. 3. 18. He that beleeues not is damned already. And 2 Cor. 13. 5 Proue your selues whether you are in the faith examine your selues: know ye not your selues that Iesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? Where the Apostle flatly setteth down that all those which haue not Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith, which is the houshold sister of repentance, are no better then reprobates, cast-aways, and condemned persons. But because the most people in these dates are grosly deceiued in repentance: both concerning what it is, what it meaneth, what it worketh, what be the qualities and conditions of it, which be the causes, and which be the lets and hindrances; and also why, when, and wherefore we should repent: therefore I haue a present intent to teach, first, what is repentance: Secondly, which be her qualities and effects: Thirdly, when we should repent: Fourthly, wherefore we should repent: And last of all, what letteth vs from repentance. Which order and

and method of teaching, although some may mislike (as indeede with me it is not ordinary) yet considering the matter I have in hand, I thinke it not inconuenient. But to the matter. Repentance is an outward sorrowing and continuall mourning in the heart and conscience for sin, ioyned with faith, and both inward and outward amendment. Inward, I say, in changing the thoughts and affections of the heart, and outward in changing the words and workes from euill to good. This repentance, no doubt, was in Dauid: who when he was couertly reproued by the Prophet Nathan and his sins laid before his eies, did not stubbornly defend them, and so inuelle against God: nor yet secretly accuse them, and daube them ouer, but cryeth out in the bitternesse of his heart, I haue sinned, and thereupon made the 51. Psalme, a Psalme indeed full of dolour and heauinesse, wherein the Prophet bewaileth his faults, lamenteth his sins, and prayeth euen for a new heart, and a new spirit, new thoughts, new affections, new purposes of amendment of life: so that in Dauid we may see an inward sorrowing, a lasting griefe (as the Booke of Psalmes doth euery where declare, which layeth him out, as it were in an Anatomy) yea, and great reformation, both in inward, & outward sins: Here therefore behold what is Repentance.

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Likewise S. Peter through infirmitie hauing denied his Lord and Maker Christ, and being pinched of his owne conscience, and wakened with the alarme of a poore Cockes crowing, went out of the court of Pilate, with an heauy heart, weeping bitterly, and euer after stoutly professing Christ, euen vnto the death. See then what is repentance. The Prophets in the old Testament, exhorting the rebellious Iewes vnto repentance, vse commonly an Hebrew Verbe, which signifies turne ye, or returne yee, & come backe againe: by the which Metaphor is meant, that like as a man that is strayed farre out of his way, must returne quite backe againe the contrary way: So those that haue strayed from the way of godlinesse to the way of sinne, must come backe againe as fast as euer they went forward, and altogether change the course of their life: so that repentance is an earnest turning vnto God, with all our heart, soule and minde. S. Iohn Baptist, and the Apostles in the new Testament, exhorting vnto repentance, vse the Greeke word, which signifieth a changing of the minde afterward, or after-wit; so that those which through their folly, and want of former wit, haue slipped into the deepe pit, and dangerous gulfe of sinne, when they come vnto themselues, & haue recouered their wits,

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will be wiſe afterward, and take héed they neuer come there againe, according to the Prouerbe: The burnt childe will take heed of the fire. By this time, I hope you ſée what is repentance, it is not euery ſorrow, but ſorrow for ſinne, not for ſome ſinne, but for all ſinne: not for an houre, but for euer: not for a day, but continually: not for a wéeke, but as long as we liue. Some thinke euery ſorrow is repentance, but ſo ſhould worldlings repent. Some thinke euery little pang for ſinne is repentance, ſo ſhould Pharaoh repent. Some thinke all weéping and lamenting for ſinne is repentance, ſo ſhould Eſau, Iudas, and Cain repent. Some thinke euery little humbling of our ſelues is repentance, but ſo ſhould Ahab repent. Some thinke that good workes, and good purpoſes are repentance, but ſo ſhould euery ſicke man repent. Some thinke that reformation of words and déedes are repentance, but ſo ſhould ciuill men repent. Some thinke that to cry God mercy is repentance, and ſo ſhould euery fole repent. You ſée therefore how many are deceiued in repentance. But if you will ſée what it is indéed, looke back to that which hath béene ſaid before: for hée that will repent in good earneſt, muſt not hang downe his head like a Bul-ruſh for a day onely, and ſo haue done: nor cry from the téeth outward,

Lord

Lord haue mercy on me, and so away: but hee must make a backe-reckoning, with diligent consideration of his former life, as did the Prophet Dauid, Psal. 119.50. I haue considered my waies, and turned my feete vnto thy Testimonies. So must every one that meaneth to repent, stinke aside into some corner, or out-place, and there hee may haue rome enough to beate his owne conscience, and to make his heart smart for his sinnes by aggrauation thereof, and weighing all the circumstances, as in the 9. of Daniel: The Church of God confesseth her sins, not lightly, but with wonderfull great exaggeration, and heaping vp one thing to another. So that it is not enough to say, I haue sinned: but to say, I haue most traiterously sinned, I haue most obstinately, carelesly, and rebellionsly sinned: I haue monstrously offended in such a place, in such a house, in such a company, on such a day in such a corner, in the darke I committed Adultery closely, when I thought none had seene me, in such a chamber I defiled my neighbours wife, mine owne conscience doth accuse me of it: in such and such company I haue beene drunke, I haue spoken and railed against Gods word, I haue mocked the Preachers, I haue spared no oathes nor filthy speech: and now O Lord, Lord, what an vgly monster

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and wretched villaine am I? Here I ſtand before thy preſence, all naked, blinde, wounded, poore, wretched and miſerable, having deſerued a thouſand damnations, if thou ſhouldeſt enter into iudgement, and try the Law with me. Therefore I beſeech thée to ſhew pitie and compaſſion vpon mée. Annoint my wounds with the oyle of mercy, reſtore mée my ſight, cloath my nakednes, enrich me that am poore, ſtrengthen me that am weake, helpe mée that am fallen: O bid me not farewell. The Infant ouercommeth his mother with crying, the childe his father with weeping, and the ſeruant his maſter by entreatie, and wilt not thou be entreated O Lord? Thus, I ſay, if every man would ſpeake in his conſcience to God, and thus narrowly, or more narrowly examine himſelfe, vndoubtedly he were in the way of repentance.

But alas, it is a world to ſée how the blinde Buzzards, and crooked Canker-wormes of this world goe awry from this rule, deceiuing themſelues with the bare title and naked name of Repentance. Many indeede can talke of it, but few walke in it: many ſpeake of it, but few feele it: many deſcribe it, but few know it. It is hid and locked vp from the world, and reuealed onely to Gods children: Many thinke they haue caught it, when

when they haue but the shadow of it: It is so high that few can reach it: It is so deepe that few can come to the bottome of it: It is so narrow, that few can enter into it: So wide, that few can comprehend it: So slippery, that few can hold it: So secret, that few can finde it: therefore my deare brethren, I beseech you let vs pray vnto our God, that he would reueale vnto vs this mistery, which is hid from the world, that we may see it, and know it, finde it, and feele it, to our endlesse comfort, through Christ Iesus, which grace he grant vs.

But now to the second point, concerning the Qualities and Fruits of Repentance: One speciall qualitie of repentance is alwaies to bring with it remission of sinnes: for where true Repentance goeth before, there remission of sinnes must necessarily follow after: Not that Repentance deserueth remission of sinnes, but because where God worketh Repentance, there he pardoneth sinne because of his promise, as in Ezek. 18.27. When the wicked turneth away from his wickednes that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shal saue his soule aliue. And againe. Esa. 55.7. Let the wicked forsake his waies, and the vnrighteous his own imaginations, and turne vnto the Lord, and he will haue mercy vpon him. So here we see to whom

whom forgiuenesse of sinnes, and the inheritance of God belongeth: namely, to the penitent sinners, to those that leaue sin, and imbrace godlinesse, to those that forsake their owne wayes and imaginations, and turne vnto the Lord. Moreouer, for such as walke in their owne waies, & follow the delights of sin, without any forecast or purpose to leaue them, they haue nothing to do with the mercy of God, and though Iesus Christ had suffered an hundred deaths (which could not be, yet shall vs impenitent sinners haue remission of his sins by his death, nor any other benefit of his Passion; for they belong only to his Church and chosen people heere vpon earth. Yea therefore that is not of the Church, he that is not grafted into Christ by faith, he that is not a member of this mysticall body, can haue nothing by Christs death. If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch & withereth, and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they burne. Ioh. 15. And we read in the 29. of Deut. how God hateth all stubborne sinners from his mercy, & doth most terribly rage and outragate vpon them. Hee that heareth the words of this curse, and blesseth himself in his heart saying, I shall haue peace although I walke according to the stubbornesse of mine owne heart, thus adding drunkennesse vnto thirst, the Lord will not be merciful vnto him, but then the wrath of

the Lord, and his iealousie shall smoke against that man, and euery curse that is written in this booke shall light vpon him. So that God saith plainly hée hath no mercy for such as walke in vaine delights of sin, and in the stubbornnes of their owne harts, adding drunkennes to thirst: that is, ioyning one horrible sin to another: yet for all this it is a wonder to sée how the blindwormes of the world deceiue themselues. For they thinke, whatsoeuer they say, whatsoeuer they doe, be it good, be it euill, whether they repent or not repent, yet they shall be saued by Christs death: as though they would make it a band to their sins, and so worke that villany against Christ. I hope to be saued by Christs death as well as the best of them all, saith some. But where is thy repentance thou miserable wretch? Dost thou thinke that Gods mercy is common to all? and Christs death a band for thy sins? No, no: when it commeth to the vpshot thou shalt hop short. For it will proue far otherwise. For thou shalt finde Gods mercy turned into iustice, and Christs death into wormes-wood, because thou hatedst knowledge, and chosedst not the feare of the Lord. Thus you sée my déere brethren, that repentance must needs goe before forgiuenesse of sin, and where it leadeth not the way, there the gates of Gods mercy are shut vp: and this is the first qualitie

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of repentance. It hath also another condition, and that is to alter and change men from that they were before, not in substance and proportion of the body, but in the qualities and conditions of the minde. For whosoeuer hath truely repented you shall by and by see a most marueilous and wonderfull change in him: so that he will not do as he hath done, nor speak as he hath spoken, nor company as he hath companied, nor play the good fellow (as they terme it) as he was wont to doe, nor run the same excesse of ryot as he was wont. And this is that amazeth the world, and causeth them to bristle & foame at the mouth like wilde Bores, and to speake euill of them that turne vnto God: For the world loueth his owne, and cannot abide that God should pluche one feather from his wings, but repentance doth violently pull men out of the clawes of Sathan, and change them from the condition of the world: for it maketh of proud, humble: of hurtfull, harmelesse: of cruell, meeke: of wolues, lambes: of Lions, sheepe: of adulterers, chaste liuers: of drunkards, sober men: of swearers, reuerent speakers: of haters, friends: of despisers, embracers: of scoffers, louers: of earthly, heauenly: of Diuels, Saints: all these worketh repentance. Paul trauelled toward Damascus a Wolfe, a Persecuter, a Bloud sucker, a Ha-

ter, a Despiser: but ere he came there, he was quite changed, and cleane of another minde: so mighty was he that met him in the way. When Jesus Christ sent downe the holy Ghost vpon his Disciples, according to his promise, there were some scoffers at Ierusalem, which mocked and said, They are full of new wine. But the same men tryed out by and by after: Men and brethren what shall we doe to be saued?

Here was a most wonderfull and sodaine change. See then the force of repentance, when God striketh it into the heart of man, and driueth the naile to the head (as they say) it effecteth that which all the wiledome and policie of man is not able to bring to passe, and when they haue prouided hither and thither, and laid their heads together, and sought all the corners of their wits, yet can they not tell which way to turne their hand, or where to begin to change the heart of a man, and to conuert him to God. Therefore repentance is stronger then all the whole world, and worketh that which all men with their naturall wits, fine heads, and deepe deuises cannot compasse: for the conuersion of a sinner is a worke supernaturall. Here then we haue a glasse to behold our selues in, whether euer we haue repented or no: For if we finde not this change and alteration in vs, we haue not repented, and so consequently remaine vn-

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der damnation. Therefore let euery man looke vnto himselfe: for marke how much he is changed and altered from his former wicked waies, so much hath he repented. And he that is the same man he was three, foure, eight, nay thirty yéers agoe, surely, surely, he hath not repented, and therefore abideth in damnation. I maruell then how these men, which neuer felt any change or alteration wrought in them; nay, whose conscience telleth them that they are not changed, nor knowe what it meaneth, can haue hope of saluation; vnlesse, peraduenture they beléeue not this doctrine, or thinke it to be false. I will send ouer these men to such as haue béene in the like case they now are, and yet thought they might doe well enough for all that, although both blinde in iudgement, and corrupt in conuersation. I haue knowne and doe know men, which before their conuersion and inward change, were counted as honest men as euer brake bread, and as substantiall men as any could be, and as true dealers, vpright liuers, good house-keepers, as any of their neighbours: yea, and they had the same opinion of themselues to: and yet notwithstanding when they haue felt repentance working this change and alteration in them, through the power of the spirit, at the preaching of the word; and when they haue had new hearts gi-

uen them to discerne better, and new eyes to see better, as men come out of a dampe, haue wondred and maruelled at the palpable and grosse darknesse they were in before, and haue burst forth into these words, that they would not be in the same case they were before, no not for all the worlds goods: for if they had dyed in that case, they were sure they should haue been damned. But I pray you what case were they in before? were they not good honest men, and well accounted of, and honest liuers, and wel taken whersoeuer they came? surely they were so taken in the world, but now they think far otherwise of themselues, their eyes being opened, and their iudgements inlightened: for now they see that they saw not before: now they vnderstand that God condemneth many whom the world iustifieth. He thinketh this example should make ciuill and worldly men feare and suspect themselues, and know their owne misery before God. For those men were as good as they before their conuersion, and yet afterward confessed that they were plunged to the bottome of hell, & drowned in the depth of damnation. He that hath eares to heare let him heare: & he that hath eyes to see let him see: for if men will still soth themselues for all this, that they shall be saued without feeling any change or worke of repentance, it will cost them ful dear

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in the end. For Christs words will prove true, that whosoever repenteth not shal be damned, that is, whosoever doth not feele in himselfe what is repentance, and finde in himselfe the qualities therof, shall be condemned: for where repentance is, there be the qualities of repentance; and where the qualities be absent, there is no true repentance. So that where Christ saith, Except ye repent, ye shal all perish: it is all one as if he had said, except you know the truth of repentance, except you can prove unto your consciences the forgiuenes of your sins, except ye feele a change and alteration in the bottom of your hearts for all your former lewd dayes and miserable actions, you shall surely perish and be damned. But let vs a little further search out the qualities of repentance. The Apostle in the 7. Chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, setteth downe seuen notable qualities and effects of repentance.

The first of them he nameth Care: For behold (saith he) this thing, that you haue beene godly sorie, what care it hath wrought in you: that is, an earnest study, & as it were a taking thought to please God: for where true repentance hath once wrought, there follows diligent care afterward: care (I say) to liue in the obedience of God: care to keepe a good conscience, care to reforme our households, care to

instruct our wiues, children, and seruants in the knowledge of God, care to pray with them morning and euening: and generally, care to performe all duties belonging to God. So that repentance is not a careleſſe, but a carefull thing. Let no man thinke therefore, that although they welter in careleſneſſe of the fleſh, & liue in ſecuritie all the daies of their life, yet their repentance is good enough: yea, though they ſpend whole dayes, nights, moneths, and yeeres in vanities, plaies and paſtimes, iniquitie, feaſts, fond delights, pleaſures & voluptuouſneſs, in negligence of all duty, forgetfulneſs of God, & contempt of all good things: yet for all this they repent for their ſins, & hope to be ſaued as well as any other. But alas, how can theſe things ſtand together: to repent for ſin, & to delight in ſin; to hate ſin, and to loue ſin; to flie from ſin, and to follow after ſin? But theſe men I perceiue would faine make S. Paul a lyar: for he ſaith, A man hath neuer repented except he be carefull afterward to please God. They ſay they doe repent, and haue repented, although they liue neuer ſo wretchedly, and careleſly. But when all licentious & lewd liuers, filthy whoremongers, beaſtly belly-gods, and careleſſe caitifes ſhall enter into the kingdome of God, and are ſaued: then ſhall theſe men come also with them, to be ſaued by careleſſe repentance.

The next qualitie and effect of repentance is named clearing of our selues: that is, discharging of our selues when sin doth accuse vs and lay things to our charge: for when sin and Sathan doe terrifie the conscience of the true penitent sinner, by and by he flyeth vnto God, and asketh forgiuenesse through Iesus Christ, so cleareth himselfe, and maketh his apologie against sinne and Sathan: like as a man that is presented into the Court vpon suspition of whoredome, or any other notorious crime, must cleare himselfe by witnesse, of that which is laid to his charge: so the conscience that is cited by Sathan before the iustice and iudgement seate of God, cleareth it selfe by repentance, and asketh forgiuenesse through Iesus Christ. So that here we may see a wonderfull fruit of a penitent conscience: it cannot abide the accusation of sin, it cannot be quiet till it be reconciled vnto God, and so haue peace with it selfe. For this is to be noted in the godly man, that when he hath committed any sin, and his conscience telleth him of it, by and by he feeles lead within him, and is all heauy and cannot sleepe quietly till he haue gotten into some corner, where he may mourne & lament to the full, & confesse and lay open himselfe vnto God, and so cleare himselfe through Iesus Christ, his conscience bearing him witnes that his sin is forgiuen. Wher-

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as contrariwise, the vngodly man, when his conscience accuseth him of sinne, he dispatcheth away all such thoughts and treadeth them vnder foot: and by & by calleth for a paire of Cards or Tables, or some merry companion to driue away time, and to put out all such thoughts out of his hea[illegible] and so indeede hee encreaseth them more and more, and causeth them to rankle inwardly.

The third qualitie is called Indignation: that is, a mortall & deadly hatred against sin, and when a man doth shudder and shake, and as it were grind his teeth at the remembrance of his sins: for this is alwayes in the penitent person, to loath and abhorre all sinne from his heart, both his owne sinnes, and the sinnes of others, and to hate it as the Diuell himselfe, which is the author of it; and to flye from it, as from the very cut-throat and hang-man of his soule, and to know it to be the onely thing that blindeth and hardeneth, that separateth from God, and procureth all plagues and diseases, both of body and soule against vs. Therefore he spitteth at it in defiance, and disdaineth it, and stoppeth his nose at the stinke of it, whencsoeuer he smelleth it.

The fourth thing is Feare, which is a certaine awe of God, when a man is afraid to displease him: for the penitent person feareth alwayes,

wayes, and being priuy to his owne infirmitie and weakenes (when God neuer so little withdraweth his grace and leaueth him alone) worketh his saluation with feare and trembling. He will not presume vpon former grace to commit any sin, or flatter himselfe in the mercy of God, and the things that he hath already tasted of God, to yéeld to some little sinne, thinking he may do that & be the child of God well enough, because some of Gods children haue fallen into greater: but rather he trembleth at the least motion of sinne, and is afraid of the temptation which Satan trappeth in the way, and is afraid when the temptations of sin are vpon him, to satisfie the hunger of sin: but rather he fighteth against sin when sin fighteth against him, & presenteth the feare of God before his eyes (as godly Ioseph in the assault of Potiphers wife) to be as it were a tower of defence, & welspring of life to auoid the snares of death.

The fift thing is Desire, that is, hungring and thirsting after righteousnesse. For the penitent man is rauished with desire of good things: he desireth to be euery day better then other, he desireth to leaue euery day some sin, he desireth to pray, he desireth new knowledge and new vnderstanding of heauenly things. He desireth to heare Sermons, & will straine himselfe to heare them. He desireth the com-

pany

pany of the godly, thinking himselfe in heauen when he is amongst them. He desireth the saluation of his very enemies, and prayeth for them. All these, and many other such like desires are in the penitent man.

The first qualitie is Zeale, which consisteth in the earnest embracing of vertue, and hatred of vice: so that the penitent person is zealous of euery good thing, zealous of Gods glory in all places, in all companies, and amongst all persons. He cannot abide that Gods honor should be impeached, or his name blasphemed, or his glory trampled vnder foot by wicked men: but will open his mouth to reproue the wicked, & stand stoutly in the defence of Gods glory. He is not like the Atheists and dissemblers, which are alwaies as the company, that is, godly amongst the godly, a Protestant amongst Protestants, wicked among the wicked; a Papist amongst Papists, a worldling amongst worldlings, and a swearer amongst swearers, a weather-cocke that turneth with euery wind. The penitent man, I say, is not of that stampe: but he is constant and zealous in all good things: he is zealous both against the pleasures and profits of sinne: though he might win a whole world, or pleasure himselfe neuer so much by committing sinne against God, yet he will refuse it: for he hath learned from Christs mouth

that

that it shall not profit a man to win the whole world, and to lose his owne soule.

The last thing is Reuenge: that is the penitent person is so offended with the sin hee hath committed, that he will be reuenged of himselfe for it. As for example, if he haue offended in gluttony, he will reuenge himselfe by fasting two or three dayes after. If he haue offended in whoredome, he will be reuenged of his lusts by haltering and bridling of them euer after: If he haue offended in couetous catching and polling of other mens goods, hee will be reuenged on himselfe by restitution, as was godly & penitent Zacheus; and this indeed is a speciall fruit of repentance, to reforme our selues in those things wherein we haue most offended. Now then we see (my deare brethren) what lyeth in the belly of repentance, and which be her inwards, so that we must needs now come to the vnlacing and vnbowelling of Christs words: Except ye repent (saith he) ye shal al perish: that is, except ye haue this forenamed Care, you shall all be damned: except ye haue this Clearing of your selues, you shall be damned: Except you haue this Indignation, you shall be damned: Except you haue this Feare, you shall be damned: Except you haue this Desire, you shall all be damned: Except you haue this Zeale, you shall all be damned: Except you haue this

Reuenge

Reuenge, you shal all be damned: For our Sauiour Christ doth not speak of the bare name of Repentance, but of Repentance with her furniture and appurtenances: so that whosoeuer hath not Repentance with all her qualities and effects, or at least some measure of them, he hath nó Repentance indéed, and therefore shall be damned: For except ye repent, ye shall all perish. But me thinketh that I heare some man say: here is nothing but damnation, damnation, you preach nothing but the Law, let vs heare of the Gospell. My Brethren, I protest vnto you, that I speake in loue whatsoeuer I speake, I desire the saluation of you all. If I could win but two of all this congregation I would count my selfe happy, and thinke that God had greatly blessed my labours. And vndoubtedly, if I knew any nearer way to bring you vnto God then by preaching the law to make you know your selues, surely, surely, I would vse it: or if I could be perswaded that the preaching of the Gospel & mercy would doe you more good, you should heare of nothing but Gospel, Gospell, Mercy, Mercy. But alas, I see that euery carelesse and ignorant man presumeth vpon Gods mercy, I see that euery filthy liuer, and notorious blasphemer, abuseth Gods mercy, in applying it to himselfe without repentance, so that they would make

Gods

Gods mercy a cloake for their sins, I see that every man would faine be flattered in sin, and heare of it no more, but haue the Gospell preached: which indeede belongeth not vnto them, continuing in their stubbornnesse, but onely to the penitent sinner who forsaketh himselfe, and groaneth and panteth vnder the burden of his sinne. Therefore when I see you humbled with the conscience of your sins, and groane and pant vnder the burden of them: when I see your faces blubbered with weeping, and your hearts mollified, and sorrowing with care, then will I comfort you, and cease to preach the Law. But I pray you, will you steale, murther, and commit adultery, and yet heare of mercy? Will you mocke, sweare, blaspheme and raile, and yet heare of mercy? Will you serue sin, hate vertue, & follow your owne lusts, & yet heare of mercy? Would you haue plaisters before you haue wounds? would you haue Physicke before you be sicke? Would you be let bloud before you haue need? Would you not account him a foolish Physition that will minister Physicke to a whole man? Would you not thinke him an vnskilfull Chirurgion, that will apply a gentle salue to an old festered sore, and not rather cozy it? Then know you my brethren, that because you are full of grosse humors, you must haue strong purgations,

purgation, because you are full of old festered wounds, you must haue corrosiue salues; for that is best for you; and the speedyest way to recouer your health: and forasmuch as you be rough horses, you must haue a rough rider, and hard knobby timber must haue hard wedges, and hard strokes with a beetle. We preach the law to driue you to Christ, we preach iudgment to make you to seeke mercy, we preach damnation to bring you to saluation. But to preach mercy & forgiuenes, before men see their sins, or know their misery by the preaching of the law, is to preach the Gospell vnprofitably. For he that is ignorant of the law, knoweth not what misery is in himself, nor what mercy is in God.

What father is there, who if his childe should play the stubborne boy, and disobey him in euery thing he commandeth, would stroke his head and say he were a good boy, and not rather seuerely correct him, and whip him with a rod? What Master will commend his seruant for doing what he list, and not what he commandeth him? euen so we may not disobey and doe euill, and looke to be flattered to, and not rather chidden. Let vs know then, that although God vse searing, lancing, or corsing and searching of the bones, and other violent remedies: yet in the meane while he procureth our health by them. And let vs further vnderstand, that for-

asmuch

as much as there is none other meanes to draw vs to saluation, but by the cleansing of al our vices, and the same cleansing cannot be done but by violence, when we be warned by the doctrine of the Law, so as our owne consciences accuse vs, although we like well to be now and then flattered and soothed, yet let vs seeke to be spoken vnto earnestly, to haue our faults told vs, and be made ashamed of them, and to haue our dishonesty discouered, and not desire to be pleased: For it were the next way to make vs rot in our owne filthinesse, if we should hold it in secret, and it would cost too dere the setting on, if we should be so flattered by men, and in the meane season the heauenly Iudge should thunder downe vpon vs.

Therefore, when any man commeth to a Sermon, let him first and formost make his reckoning to be rebuked, as meet it is, and let him vnderstand that it is for his profit that he is not soothed. And if he haue itching eares, let him lay them away from him, assuring himselfe else that he is fore-closed, so shall he neuer receiue the doctrine to his profit and edifying: and let him be content to haue his soares rubbed and bewrayed, that he may be brought to that which is for his welfare. If any man please a sicke body what shall become of him? shall he giue him drinke euery minute of an

houre: shall he giue him wine, whereas he should giue him water? shall he giue him fal-lets: it were the next way to poyson him. To be short, it is certaine that a man doth alwaies seeke his own death, when he would haue men to sooth him. But now, which is better: either that he which hath the ordering of a sick man, should yeeld to all his desires, or that he should bridle him, notwithstanding that he chafe and gnash his teeth, because he may not haue his will in his desires? You see therefore how dangerous a thing it is to flatter and raise vp men with the preaching of Mercy, before they haue beene cast downe with the sence of Gods iudgement. Cease therefore to open your mouthe, to make hue and crie ouer the common, saying: They preach nothing but the Law, the Law, Damnation, Damnation, vnlesse ye will take in Christ to, and make him one of the number, and accuse him of want of wisedome, because he preacheth and cryeth out, that whosoeuer repenteth not shall be condemned. For my part, I preach the Gospell to whom the Gospell belongeth, and the Law to whom the Law belongeth, Iudgement to whom iudgement appertaineth. And therefore hold your peace, and be content to be ruled by the wisedome of God. But now let vs proceede to the third generall point, which is the time when we

shall

shal repent. The holy Ghost in the Scriptures pointeth vs to the present time, and exhorteth vs to make that the time of our repentance: Ioel. 2. 12. Therefore also now the Lord saith: Turne you vnto me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. Likewise in the 3. chapter to the Hebrews. Exhort one another while it is called to day, least any of you be hardned through the deceitfulnesse of sin. And in the same chapter: To day if ye will heare his voice, harden not your harts, as in the prouocation. So that now, euen now, euen now is the time of our repentance.

Now whilst he calleth, now whilst he speaketh, now whilst he knocketh, let vs now therefore heare, let vs now therefore obey, let vs now therefore redeeme this day, this present Wednesday, which haue fore-slowed so many daies, which haue so long hardned our hearts, which haue let so many good things runne out and spill besides: let vs take vp this day, and make it the day of our repentance. Although we could neuer be moued with any Sermon hitherto, yet let vs now be moued once at last. Let vs now say, this shall be my day of repentance, I will defer it no longer, but now will I turne vnto my God, and forsake all my former wicked waies, and mine own imaginations. I will now change the course of my life, & begin a

new againe. I will be acquainted with Gods word, and take counsel there how to do, how to behaue my selfe in every action. I will not only reforme my selfe, but also my whole household, wife, children and seruants, according vnto the same. Thus my deere brethren, I beseech you purpose in your harts without any further delay: & be not like to Epicures and slack-graces, which say, Youth will be youthfull, and youth will haue a course, and what should we make it so holy when we are yong: tush, there needs but a sigh an houre before death, let vs be merry now, we shall neuer be younger, wee will repent when we are old. As though for soules they had Repentance in their fistes, and at their commandement, and that they could repent when they list. No, no, these fellowes shal pay for their presumption: for God will giue them ouer to hardnes of hart and impenitencie, because they take so much vpon them, and make so long delaies, that in the meane season they might enioy the profits and pleasures of sin. Therefore good brethren, let vs not put it off from day to day, but let vs now seeke the Lord whilst hee may be found, and call vpon him whilst hee is neere: let vs take time while time is, for time and tide tarryeth for no man: Let vs know this to be the time of our visitation. Our Sauior Christ wept ouer Ierusalem,

because

because they knew not the time of their visitation. He reproued the Iewes because they could discerne the face of the skie, but could not discerne the signes of the times. And surely in the end it will turne to our destruction, if we will not know this to be the day of mercy, the time of grace, wherin God stretcheth forth his hand vnto vs, & wisdome crieth out in the streets. Therfore now whilst we haue the light let vs walke as children of the light: the night commeth when no man can worke. It shall be too late to call for mercy after this life, when the gates of mercy are shut vp, and repentance will be too late. My deere Christians, let vs remember the fiue foolish virgins, which because they ouer-slowed the time, had heauen gates barred vp against them. Let vs also remember the fearefull and dolefull examples of the rich Glutton, which being in hell torments, yelled and yelped for the least ease and helpe that might be, and could not haue it. An hundred thousand times therefore better it is for vs, to leaue our sins now, to mourne for them now, & now to repent, then hereafter, alas, when it shal be too late: better now a great deal to take some paines, to straine our selues to leaue our sins, and to make our hearts smart for them, then to be condemned for euer, and to cry in the bottome of hell: Were haue wearied our

selues in the way of wickednes and destruction and we haue gone through dangerous waies, but we haue not knowne the way of the Lord. What hath pride profited vs? or what profit hath the pomp of riches brought vs? All these things are passed away like a shadow, and as a Post that passed by. We haue set our selues against the children of God, we haue had them in derision, and in a parable of reproach: we fooles thought their life madnes, and their end without honor: but lo, they are counted amongst the children of God, & their portion is amongst the Saints: Therfore let vs know the time of our calling, and let vs not be worse then the fowles of the ayre: the Turtle, the Carne, and the Swallow, obserue the time of their coming: the husbandman taketh his time, the Marriner watcheth his tides: therefore let vs also take the time, & turne to the Lord whilst it is said to day: which grace God grant vs.

Now let vs returne to the fourth point, concerning the causes which may moue vs vnto repentance. Herein I haue obserued nine special things.

First, the great mercy of God leadeth vs vnto repentance, as Rom. 2. The bountifulnes of God leadeth vs vnto repentance, saith the Apostle: God doth continually follow vs with his mercies and benefits both concerning our soules

soules & bodies, wee haue no good thing which we haue not receiued at his hands, we hold all that we haue of him; & to him we are beholding for all: great is his mercy towards our bodies, & euery mercy & benefit either towards soule or body calleth vs to repentance, he giueth vs meat, drinke and cloathing, these call vs to repentance: he keepeth vs at his owne cost and charges here below, this calleth vs to repentance, the Sun, the Moone, and the Starres call vs vnto repentance, the birds of the ayre, the fishes of the sea, and the fruits of the earth, cry out vpon vs both loud and shrill; Repent, repent: All creatures moue vs vnto repentance: Our Creation calleth vs, our Redemption cryeth, our Sanctification knocketh, and our Election moueth vs to repentance: What could God doe more for his Vine-yard that he hath not done? Therefore let vs repent.

Secondly, the iudgements of God moue vs vnto repentance, for all the thunderbolts, plagues, and punishments, which God hath throwne downe vpon obstinate sinners from the beginning of the world, are so many warning pieces vnto vs, to awake vs out of the dead sleep of sin, and to pitch vs to repentance. As in 1 Cor. 10. when the Apostle had cited diuers great iudgements of God against the old Israelites for diuers sins, he concludeth:

Now all theſe things came vnto them for examples, and were written to admoniſhvs, vpon whom the ends of the world are come: So that all the iudgements we read of in the ſcriptures, are as ſo many admonitions, and as it were Cart-ropes to draw vs to repentance. All the iudgements we reade of, doe ſee, and heare of euery day, knock with maine ſtrokes, beat downe-right vpon our conſciences to repentance. The vgly monſters, ſtrange birds, and fiery conſtellations, vnknowne comets, ſodaine deaths, maruellous droughts, vnwonted ſnowes, horrible inundations, forraigne wonders, ſtrange apparitions, threatning of heauen aboue with flaming and ſhooting fire, trembling of the earth vnder our feet, and our houſes ouer our heads, as of late daies: What are all theſe, but as it were great Cranes with beames and cable-ropes, to draw vs to the Lord by repentance?

Thirdly, the word of God helpeth vs to repentance: For as God in the old time ſent his Prophets both early and late to call the rebellious Ieiwes to repentance: ſo he ſendeth abroad the Preachers & Meſſengers in theſe dayes to ſound vp the Trumpet of his word, and to ring the ſweet bell of Aaron amongſt them, to awake them to repentance: but alas! how lightly are they regarded? Who heareth

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their voyce: But surely this is the last remedie that God hath appointed, and if this will not moue vs to repentance, if this will not cure vs, then are we altogether vncurable.

Fourthly, the infinite number of sinnes we haue committed, ought to be so many spurs in our sides to pricke vs to repentance. It is sufficient (saith S. Peter) that we haue spent the time of our life after the lusts of the Gentiles, walking in wantonnesse of lusts, drunkennes, gluttony, drinkings, and all abhominable idolatries. Therefore it is time now to repent. Oh that men would looke back to themselues, as they were forty, thirty, twenty, or ten yeeres agoe! Oh that they would call to minde their open and secret sins, and me thinketh it should make their hearts bleede within their bellies, to thinke vpon them! Oh that they would consider how much time they haue mis-spent, and how many good things they haue neglected, and altogether omitted!

Fiftly, the shortnesse of our life calleth earnestly vpon vs to repent. The time of our life is sixty yeeres and ten, and if they liue to eightie yeeres, yet is their strength but labour and sorrow, and so it is cut off quickly, and we flye away saith the Prophet Dauid, we haue spent our yeeres as a thought, therefore he addeth: Teach vs to number our daies, that we may

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apply our hearts to wisdome. Our life, for the shortnesse and inconstancie of it, in the Scriptures, is compared to grasse, to a vapour, to smoke, to a weauers shuttle, which glideth away swiftly. Euen so the daies of men passe away, no man knoweth how. Man is of short continuance (saith Iob) and full of trouble. Experience teacheth vs, that to day a man, to morrow none. Hence, away we must all, here is no biding place for vs: how soone we know not. Therefore let vs repent.

Sixtly, the small number of those which shall be saued, ought to thrust vs forward to repentance. Striue to enter in at the narrow Gate: for many, I say vnto you, will seeke to enter in, and shal not be able, saith Christ. Luke 13.24. And in another place he saith: The gate is straight, and the way narrow that leadeth vnto life, and few there be that finde it. If men would consider of this, it wold make them look better about them, and trie with themselues whether they be of that small number or no.

Seuenthly, death threatens vs, which is very terrible to the flesh, and the remembrance of it very bitter to a man that is soused and soked in the pleasures of this world. It flattereth no man, it regardeth no person, it weigheth no friendship, it careth not for rewards, it is very grim, vgly, and cruell, and killeth downe-right

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where it hitteth. Therefore let vs repent.

Eightly, the day of iudgement, and second appearing of the Son of man, will come as a Theefe in the night, in the which the heauens shall passe away with the noise, and the Elements shall melt with heat, and the earth with the workes that are therein shall be burnt vp. Seeing therefore that all these things must be dissolued, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy conuersation, and godlinesse? saith S. Peter. 2. 3. The Lord Iesus shall shew himselfe from heauen with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, rendring vengeance vnto them that know not God, and obey not vnto the Gospel of our Lord Iesus Christ, saith the Apostle, 2 Thes. 1. I saw (saith S. Iohn, Reu. 20.) a great white throne, and one that sat on it, from whose face fled away both the earth and the heauen, & their place was no more found. And I saw the dead, both great & small, stand before God, & the bookes were opened, & another booke was opened, which is the booke of life, and the dead were iudged of those things which were written in the bookes, according to their works; and the sea gaue vp her dead which were in her, & death and hell deliuered vp their dead which were in them, & they were iudged euery man according to his workes. In these places we see both the sodainenesse,

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the feare & ioy of Christs comming.

For he shall not come poorely and contemptuously, as in the first visitation, but he shal come very princely, royally, and triumphantly, to the great terrour of his enemies; when a consuming fire shall go before him, and ten thousand thousands of Angels waite vpon him, at what time the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chiefe Captains, and the mighty men, & euery bond-man, and euery free-man, shall hide themselues in dens, and amongst the rocks of mountaines, and say to the rocks and the mountaines, fall on vs, and hide vs from the presence of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lambe: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who can stand? Reu. 6. Therefore let vs repent.

The last thing is Hell torments, then the which nothing is more intollerable. Therefore saith Christ, Mar. 9. If thine hand cause thee to offend, cut it off, it is better for thee to enter into life maymed, then hauing two hands to goe into hell, into the fire that neuer shal be quenched, where the worme dieth not, and the fire neuer goeth out. The Scripture speaketh terribly to our senses concerning the estate of the damned persons, calling it Hell-fire, damnation, the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for euer. In the 30. Chapter of

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the Prophesie of Isay, it is called Tophet, and is euen prepared of old, it is euen prepared for the Lord: he hath made it deepe and large, the burning thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a riuer of Brimstone, doth kindle it. These speeches are terrible in themselues, and very marueilously amaze vs. But if I had the tongues of an hundred men, nay, of an hundred Angels, yet were I not able to vtter them, as some one day shall feele them, much lesse were you able to conceiue them. If all the tortures and cruell torments that can be deuised by the wit of man were executed vpon some one, yet were it nothing to this. We poore wretches thinke there is no paine to a cholike, or a cruell ague. But if all cholicks, agues, and all other strange diseases, could possibly light vpon one man, it were but a flea-biting to that which is to come. The paine is endlesse, easelesse, and remediless. The dayes of their hellish torments shall neuer weare out, nor their yeeres come to an end, the longer they continue the lesse hope they haue: when as many yeeres be expired as there be men in the world, and starres in the heauens: when as many thousand yeeres are ended, as there be stones and sands by the seashore, yet still there be ten hundred thousand times so many more to come. Those that will

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not now be moued in hearing, shall then be crushed in peeces in feeling. All drunkards, swearers, whore-mongers, vsurers, extortioners, lyers, mockers, contemners, secure persons, iolly fellowes, roisting ruffians, lustie bloods, the braue lads of this world, and all other vnbeleeuers, shall one day be apprehended and araigned before the bar of Gods tribunall seat, where the Maiestie of God shall stand aboue them with a naked sword of vengeance, and a Scepter of Iustice, the diuell, that old Sathan, shall stand on the one side to accuse them, and their owne consciences on the other side to condemne them, & the gasping gulfe of hell vnderneath them, ready to swallow them vp for euermore. Then shall the dreadfull sentence of eternall woe and damnation proceede against them, Goe ye cursed into hell-fire, &c. There they shal drinke (as iust recompence of their iniquity) the bitter cup of Gods eternall wrath & indignation in the kingdome of darkenesse, and in the fearefull presence of Sathan, & all the cursed enemies of Gods grace: where the dolefull drum of Gods anger shall euer sound through their eares, where shall euer be weeping and gnashing of teeth, where shall be confusion, woe, and endlesse lamentation; their gripes shall be so great, their grones so deepe, and their garbolles so intollerable, that they

they shall grin like a dog in their infernall convulsions, and with howling & yelling cry out: Woe alas that ever I was borne: Oh that I had neuer beene borne! or that my mother had borne me a toad: for then my condition should haue beene better then it is; cursed was the time I was begot in, the houre I was conceiued in, and the day I sucked my mothers paps, cursed I was alwaies: cursed I am, & cursed I shal be euermore. Woe, woe, how great is my torment: Whose heart doth not melt: whose eares do not glow: whose haires do not stand vp on his head to heare these things: Therefore deere brethren let vs repent. If the mercy of God cannot allure vs, let his iudgements scare vs: If his iudgements cannot scare vs, let his word moue vs: If his word cannot moue vs, let our sins amaze vs: If our sins cannot amaze vs, let the shortnes of our life damp vs: If the shortnesse of our life cannot dampe vs, let the small number of those that shall be saued affray vs: if that cannot affray vs let death terrifie vs: If death cannot terrifie vs, let the day of iudgement shake vs: if that cannot shake vs, let hell torments thunder vs & rend vs in peeces: For verily my brethren, if none of all these can preuaile, if wee will not for all this repent, but be obstinate, then wee shall all perish and be damned, according

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to Christs words. Now let vs proceed to speak of those things which hinder from repentance: which indeed, although they be in number infinite, yet at this time I will lay forth seuen speciall lets and hinderances vnto repentance.

The first is Vnbeliefe: that is, when men will not beleeue such things which are spoken and proued vnto them out of the word of God: that it is that vomiteth vp all good things, and poisoneth the very entrailes of a man, and keepeth all good graces from vs, as appeareth, Mat. 15. 38. Hee did not many great workes there for their vnbeliefe sake: and in the fourth Chapter to the Hebrewes it is said: Vnto them was the Gospell preached, as also vnto vs: but the word that they heard profited them not, because it was not mixt with Faith in those that heard it. So that here we may see, although we heare neuer so much, yet if wee bring not faith with vs, wee shall neuer profit vnto repentance: For vnbeliefe tainteth vp our hearts for Sathan, and refuseth all the wholesome doctrine of saluation, and doth so harden men in the wayes of sin, that in the end they become past feeling, and cannot be touched one whit, eyther with the iudgements or mercy of God, but count the one as blasts of winde, and make the other a couert for their filthinesse. You shall note some men, who when they

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haue heard their sins straightly ripped vp by the word of God, and their iust damnation proued by the same, without speedy and earnest repentance, will breake out into these words of vnbeliefe: If this be as he saith, God helpe vs, I hope it is not so: I trust I shall doo well enough for all this, as long as I haue a good faith in God, and doe no body no harme: Shal I leaue my pleasures and my profits for their saying? What? doe they thinke none shall be saued but such as reade the Scriptures, and heare Sermons? God forbid, but those which doe not goe to heare Sermons should be saued as well as they: why, may not one serue God as wel at home in his house, hauing good bookes and good Prayers, as by comming to the Church to heare Sermons and Seruice? Alas these men stand too much in their owne light, and bewray what folly and ignorance is in them. For doe they thinke to be saued by any other meanes then God hath appointed? or when God hath auouched any thing in his word, will they except against it, and so make God a lyer? When God hath once set down a thing, and proued it to their faces, will they yet reply? when God hath told vs, that the preaching of the word is the ordinary meanes of our saluation, shal we hope to be saued although we contemne it, and neuer, (or very seldom) heare

it: Is not this plaine infidelitie and vnbeliefe, that when God saith one thing wee will say another: when God saith yea, we will say no, I hope not so: Yea surely, that is it that stoppeth the way vnto Gods graces, and barreth vs out from repentance.

The second let is, the presumption of Gods mercy: for if men be sharply reproued for their sin, and exhorted vnto repentance, by and by they talke couertly, saying; God is mercifull, God is mercifull: as though God were made all of mercy, and that there were no iustice in him at all. And thus the wicked make Gods mercy an occasion to sinne. Which thing the Prophet Nahum in the first of his Prophesie doth sharply reproue. The Lord (saith hee) is slow to anger, but he is great in power, and wil not surely cleare the wicked. But because I haue spoken before of this presuming and misapplying of Gods mercy, I will heare passe it ouer, willing you to note it as one speciall let vnto repentance.

The third hinderance is, the example of the multitude: for that doth harten and embolden men vnto sinne: As when many birds flicker and flocke together, they fall vpon the baite without any feare, but one or two alone will be afraid: euen so the examples of many sin-companions do embolden men to run through

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the ſnares of Sathan without any miſtruſt. Therefore it is ſaid in Exo. 23. Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to doe euill. This is the thing which hindereth a great number from God: for they neuer looke vp vnto God, or to his word, but ſtare vpon the common doings of moſt men, and examples of the world: thinking if they doe as the moſt men doe, and as their fore-fathers haue done before them, they are cocke-ſure and on an euen ground. And thereupon ariſeth their diuelliſh prouerbe; Doe as moſt men doe, and the feweſt will ſpeak ill of you. But they haue forgotten S. Pauls rule, Rom. 12. Faſhion not your ſelues like vnto this world. Theſe fellowes that ſtand vpon multitude, will reaſon thus: Wee ſee none of the great ones of the world, none of the Noble, none of the rich, none of the wiſe and prudent receiue this doctrine, but onely a few ſhake-ragges, and beggerly raſcals, and therefore it is a token that it is nothing worth, and that it is doubtfull, & not for vs to meddle withall. Loe what thoughts may creepe into our heads, and how ſlily Sathan may trumpe in our way, and blind-fold vs, and lead vs away in the darke, by doting vs with the example of the multitude. Therefore let vs take heed of thoſe pit-fals which Sathan lafeth in our way, and not be carried away with thoſe thoughts

and reasons. The wicked beare themselues in hand, that they shall winne the game, and that the goale goeth on their side, & there is nothing but crowing long before it be day, & great triumphing among them before any stroke be giuen, and that because we are but a handfull of people, and they a great multitude, & that in a manner the whole world agréeth with them to practise our death. Thus the Diuell doth cast a mist before their eyes, and closely leades them away from repentance. Therefore deare brethren let vs stand fast in the word of the Lord, and not be carried away, or bowed quite down with the raging streame of the multitude, but let vs know it to be one speciall engine of Sathan, whereby he driueth vs from repentance.

The fourth let vnto repentance is, long custome of sin: for that taketh away all sence and féeling of sinne, and maketh it as it were another nature vnto vs, so that we may as well alter nature as shake it off, when it is once thus souldred vnto vs, through long custome. Therfore it is said, Ier. 13. 23. Can the blacke More change his skinne, or the Leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do euill. There the Prophet affirmeth that it is as hard to cure an old disease that is bred in the bones, and to remedy a sinne that hath béene hatched and brought vp with vs, as

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to wash a blacke Moze white, or to change the spots of a Leopard, which cannot be without destroying of nature. And surely, try it who will, he shall finde as hard a matter to leaue an old custome, whether it be of swearing, of gaming, of lying, of whoring, of euill company, or any other sinne, as to wash an Æthiopian. Therefore it is written, Prou. 17. Though thou shouldst bray a foole in a morter, among Wheate brayed with a pestle, yet will not his foolishnesse depart from him. So that as long as wee are in custome with sinne, the doore of repentance is barred against vs.

The fift hinderance is, long escaping of punishment, for the wicked thereby are hardened in sin, and driuen off from repentance: euen as an old theefe that hath stolen a long time, and escaped both prison and gallowes, is animated more boldly to proceed in his wickednes thinking he shall so alwaies escape. So many filthy and lose liuers goe forward in their abhomination without repentance, thinking that because God doth not incontinently punish them, and shew some manifest iudgement and signe of his wrath vpon them, therefore they shall be acquited for altogether. Whereas contrariwise, if God should by and by strike them downe as soone as they had sinned, by thundering vpon one, and lightning vpon another,

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and raining fire and brimstone vpon the third, it would make them afraid. Hereupon it is said in 2 Pet. 3. 2. 4. This first vnderstand, that there shall come in the last dayes, mockers, which will walke after their lusts, and say: Where is the promise of his comming? For since the Fathers dyed, all things continue alike from the beginning of the Creation. But let these men wel know, that when God hath delayed a long time, and prolonged the terme of the wicked, at length he will shew, that although he waited for their repentance, yet he forgot not their misdædes, but registred them before him, and packed them vp vpon a great heaps to encrease the terrour of his wrath.

The first hinderance is, the beholding of other mens ends. For when some men that haue liued a wicked and an vngracious life, and haue dæne notorious sinners, euen to the worldward, so that euery man could point at them: yet if vpon their death-bed they can say a few good words, and cry God mercy, and say their prayers, and forgiue all the world, and so dye quietly, it is marueilous to heare how foolish people of the world wil exalt them, and iustifie them, saying: He made a very good end as any man could make, he died as quiet as a Lambe, and set all things in good order before he dyed. Hereupon another wicked and monstrous

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varlet is incouraged to sinne: For thinketh he, such a man lived as lowsely as I, or any man else, and yet he made a very good end, and why may not I do so too? but alas these mens eyes are bleared, for to dye quietly is not to dye godly: to cry God mercy for fashion, is not to have God mercifull: to say a few prayers from the teeth outward, is not to dye in the faith of Christ: for many doe all these, and yet die miserably.

The last let is, hope of long life: for while men feede and besot themselues in this hope, they are drunken in sin, and defer the day of repentance, as the rich man in the 12. of Luke, dreaming of his long life, cast off all thought of God and the other life, and of Christs coming, and of all good things, and said within himselfe: Soule, thou hast much goods laid vp for many yeeres, liue at ease, eate, drinke, and take thy pastime. Thus the bleare-eyed men of this world, choake vp repentance, and quite smother it, by dotting themselues with hope of long life. Therefore my deare brethren I beseech you by the mercies of God, in the bowels of Christ Jesus, that none of all these common lets may stay you from speedy & vnfained repentance, but that you may ouerslide them all: least happily you being found without repentance, and taken tardy in your sins,

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should all perish and be damned, according to Christs sentence. Wherefore in conclusion, let us with godly Ezechiah be afraid of Gods threatnings, sorrow afore-hand, stand in awe of God, examine our consciences, mourne for our sins, and lament inwardly, that when the wicked, who have swimmed in pleasure here below, shall enter into their eternall paines, wée may then, I say, there haue euerlasting peace and rest: that when Iesus Christ shall appeare from heauen with all his Angels, wée may haue crownes of glory, and raigne with our God, and our Sauiour his Sonne, and all his Saints and Angels, in the midst of all ioy in the heauens for euermore. To the which ioy bée bring vs all, which hath so dearely bought vs, Iesus Christ the righteous: To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Glory, Praise, Power, and Dominion, now and for euermore.

Amen.

FINIS.

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Dent, A.